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Narrating the Death of Jesus in Mark: Utterances of the Main Character, Jesus*

Abstract: Im Rahmen seines Textes lässt der Erzähler des Evangeliums nach Markus die Hauptfigur der Erzählung, Jesus, dessen Tod selbst durch gezielte Aussagen im Voraus deuten (Mk 8,31; 9,31; 10,33; 14,21.41). Da niemand beim Endgericht ein Tauschmittel für sein Leben hat (8,37), gibt er, der Menschensohn, sein Leben als Lösegeld für viele (10,45). Er starb gewaltsam als Auslösung für viele (14,24), kommt aber als Menschensohn am Ende wieder, um die, die ihm und seinem Evangelium treu blieben (8,35 f.), zu retten (13,26 f.). Diese Sinngebung des Todes Jesu ist traditionsgeschichtlich unabhängig von der (vor-)paulinischen Deutung des Sterbens Christi, der Vorstellung von der Auslieferung des Gottessohnes „für‘ unsere Sünde/uns/alle“.

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With Rhoads', Dewey's, and Michie's "Mark as Story" appearing in a third edition in 2012, there is no need to dispute the approach that the Gospel of Mark should be heard as a narrative read to an audience, and, if I may add, an episodic narrative. Of course, it is not possible to give attention to the whole discourse within the limited scope of this paper. But as it has been illustrated since that seminal essay of Norman Petersen, the "ideological" point of view of the narrator of the Gospel according to Mark is portrayed through the main character, Jesus. He submits to God's will and does what has been written. Introduced by God as his beloved Son (Mark 1,11), he is presented to the audience as the reliable character.¹

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1 Cf. N. Petersen, Point of View in Mark's Narrative, *Semeia* 12 (1978) 97–121; D. Rhoads, J. Dewey, and D. Michie, *Mark as Story. An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Minneapolis 2012, 44.

In this essay, I will give attention to what Jesus himself, the main character, expresses about his death. To taper the topic down even more, the focus will be on those utterances by which the main character explains his death, particularly expressing the benefit his future death has for others.² It is notable that in all these instances the Markan Jesus addresses his disciples and that he often uses expressions alluding to Scripture.³

An approach focusing on the utterances of the main character against the foil of Scripture will of course not do full justice to the topic, because the narration of the nonverbal action (e.g., the preparation of the Passover meal or the crucifixion) needs more attention. Nevertheless, studying the verbal utterances of the main character is a sound point of departure. The manner in which the Jesus of Mark foretells his death in the language of Scripture is compared with the interpretation of the death of Christ by Paul, his predecessors and his followers. This is done in order to fit our construction of Mark's concept of the meaning of the death into a history of early Christian thought. However, to grasp the development of the interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus in the first decades of Christianity, it is fundamental to understand that his crucifixion precedes its interpretation. Like those before and alongside Paul, the author of the Gospel according to Mark developed an understanding of the death of the "King of the Jews," which originated in post-Easter reflection by the believers. Unlike Paul and his predecessors, he lets his main character develop this understanding along a story line, using the technique of prolepsis or foreshadowing.⁴ Our task is to construct this aspect of Mark's story on the basis of the mimesis of verbal action, on basis of utterances during which the main character anticipates his death. This however, does not allow us to argue as historians that Jesus of Nazareth anticipated, announced, or interpreted his death in the way in which the main character does in the story.

² The utterances on the cup (Mark 10,38–39; 14,36) and the sending of the beloved Son (Mark 12,6 within 12,1–12) will thus not be treated. On this, cf. K. Backhaus, "Lösepreis für viele" (Markus 10,45). Zur Heilsbedeutung des Todes Jesu bei Markus, in: *Der Evangelist als Theologe. Studien zum Markusevangelium* (SBS 163), ed. T. Söding, Stuttgart 1995, 91–118, here 101–105.

³ With "Jesus" I mean the narrated Jesus, with "Jesus' words or sayings" I refer to the sentences the narrator allowed his main character to utter. Questions on the traditio-history of such sayings and their possible relation to Jesus of Nazareth are to be asked (and if possible, answered) in another context. Cf. C. Breytenbach, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (KEK), Göttingen, forthcoming.

⁴ On this, cf. D. du Toit, *Prolepsis als Prophetie. Zur christologischen Funktion narrativer Anachronie im Markusevangelium*, WuD 26 (2001) 165–189; Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story* (see n. 1), 48–49.

To answer such questions, proper old style historical critical (including tradition-historical) analysis is needed.⁵

1 Delivering the Son of Man and the (pre-)Pauline “deliverance formulae”

According to pre-Pauline tradition “Christ died ‘for’ our sins according to the Scriptures” (1Cor 15,3). In the Gospel according to Mark the narrator tells the story in such a manner that Jesus’ utterances about his own expected death are always claimed to be in accordance with what has been written. Alluding to Ps^{LXX} 40,10, he announces during the last supper that one of the Twelve who is eating with him will hand him over (εἷς ἐξ ὑμῶν παραδώσει με ὁ ἐσθίων μετ’ ἐμοῦ, Mark 14,18). In Mark 14,21 the Markan Jesus says that the Son of Man must depart, as it is written about him (υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑπάγει καθὼς γέγραπται περὶ αὐτοῦ). With καθὼς γέγραπται the narrator lets Jesus pick up an utterance from Mark 9,12 that it is written – where precisely he does not tell – that the Son of Man “must suffer many things and be scorned.” In 14,21 the main character goes beyond suffering and being treated with contempt and refers to his eminent death. The verb used here, ὑπάγω, “to leave or depart,” is used metaphorically and means “to die.”⁶ Mark’s Jesus comments this with an initial woe juxtaposed to a *tōb*-saying: “but woe to that one by whom the Son of (the) Man is delivered! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.”⁷ Furthermore, the deliverance of the Son of Man leads, metaphorically spoken, to his departure, that is, his death. The main character of the Gospel according to Mark shares the common early Christian conviction that his death should be understood in the light of the Scriptures. But can one be more specific about this?

Even before Paul the meaning of the death of Jesus was expressed by phrases like “the lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself up (τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν) for our sins” (Gal 1,4), or the Lord Jesus “who was delivered (παρεδόθη) for our transgres-

⁵ On this, cf. C. Breytenbach, From Mark’s Son of God to Jesus of Nazareth – Un cul-de-sac?, in: The Quest for the Real Jesus. Radboud Prestige Lectures by Prof. Dr. Michael Wolter (Bibl. Interpr. S. 120), ed. J. van der Watt, Leiden 2013, 19–56.

⁶ Cf. F.W. Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Chicago³2000 (BDAG), s.v. 3.

⁷ Mark 14,21. The woe and the *tōb*-saying combined in a parallelism and the occurrence of the double determined Semitic expression *the Son of the Man*, indicate that the Evangelist lets Jesus react by using a traditional saying.

sions” (Rom 4,25a). Does the Gospel according to Mark narrate the deliverance of its main character, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, against this backdrop? If we turn to Mark 14,41, the intended sense of the verb παραδιδόναι comes to the fore: “The hour has come; the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners.”⁸ The Son of Man is handed over into the power of others.⁹ The verb does not mean “to betray,” but “to hand over” into the power of someone else.¹⁰ In the narration that follows, Jesus makes it clear that Judas is the one delivering him, ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτόν/με (14,42.44). Earlier in the discourse, the narrator introduced him as Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτόν (3,19). Later it is told that he planned an opportunity to hand Jesus over to his enemies (14,10–11). The Jesus of Mark teaches his disciples (cf. 9,31) that the Son of Man will be handed over to the hands of the sinners and that they (sc. the sinners) will kill him (ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτόν). Who will hand him over? The Markan Jesus is probably referring to the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin, who handed the bound Jesus to the Romans, who killed him (15,1.10). It is notable that the prediction in 9,31 alludes to Scripture.¹¹ Foreshadowing the events to come, the main character repeats what was said in Mark 9,31 in more detail in 10,33 and confirms that it is the chief priests and scribes who turn Jesus over to the Gentiles (παραδώσουσιν αὐτόν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) and the latter who will kill the Son of Man: “Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the nations.”¹² But who will hand over the Son of Man in the first instance, that is, who is the logical subject of the passive παραδοθήσεται in 10,33?¹³ In the light of 14,42.44 where Judas is called ὁ παραδιδούς με/αὐτόν, it is clear that the logical subject of the passive παραδίδοται in 14,41 is Judas. This is probably also the

⁸ Mark 14,41.

⁹ This use of the verb παραδιδόναι is not confined to the Son of Man, it is also used in the case of John the Baptist (Mark 1,14) and those close to Jesus (13,9.11–12).

¹⁰ On this, cf. C. Eschner, Gestorben und hingegeben “für” die Sünder. Die griechische Konzeption des Unheil abwendenden Sterbens und deren paulinische Aufnahme für die Deutung des Todes Jesu Christi (WMANT 122), 2 vols., Neukirchen-Vluyn 2010, 2.197–199. Cf. also Mark 15,1.10.15; 1Tim 1,20.

¹¹ Mark 9,31 resounds rather Dan 7,25 than Isa^{LXX} 53,6.12.

¹² Mark 10,33.

¹³ Mark 10,33f. draws on the vocabulary of the passion narrative: ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς (passim), κατακρίνω (14,64), παραδίδωμι (passim), ἐμπαίζω (15,20.31), ἐμπτύω (14,65; 15,19), ἀποκτείνω (14,1). Μαστιγώω (10,34) instead of φραγελλώω (15,15) might be due to μάστιξ in Isa^{LXX} 50,6. In Mark 16,6 ἡγέρθη reflects the traditional Χριστὸς ἡγέρθη/ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν (cf. Rom 4,25, see also ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν in Rom 10,9) instead of the active ἀνίστημι in 10,34.

case with παραδοθήσεται in 10,33. Judas will deliver Jesus to the high priest and the scribes, who will condemn him to death and hand him over to the gentiles, referring to the Romans. Even though human action is encapsulated by divine purpose as has been written, the focus of the passives παραδίδοται (9,31; 14,21) and παραδοθήσεται (10,33) cannot be on God as actor. They are not meant as *passiva divina*.¹⁴ This philological observation has important traditio-historical consequences.

Many scholars argue that in Gal 1,4 and Rom 4,25a Paul expressed himself by drawing on traditional formulaic language the first Christian groups used.¹⁵ Where these so-called “deliverance formulae” form the backdrop of the utterances, it is either God who hands his Son over (Rom 4,25a [passive]; 8,32; cf. John 3,16) or the Son who delivers himself (Gal 1,4; 2,20; cf. Eph 5,2.25). In contrast to Mark, the subject or logical subject of the passive is fixed. In Mark Jesus calls himself Son of Man. In the prediction in 8,31 about his suffering, in 9,31 and 10,33 the term “Son of Man” is used to express the grammatical subject; it is about his deliverance, he is not called “Son of God” as in the so-called deliverance formulae. The logical subjects of the verbs in passive (9,31 and 10,33; cf. also 14,21.41) are not God or his Son, but actors in the narrative. We do not need to get into the detail of the meaning of ὑπέρ or περί and the genitive in the case of the so-called deliverance formulae. In these formulae, however, they are a fixed part of the expression to deliver someone for the sake of someone or something and firmly attached to the active or passive form of the verb (παρα)δίδωμι. It suffices to state that this crucial prepositional phrase, which expresses the benefit of the deliverance in the Pauline tradition lacks in Mark 9,31; 10,32; 14,21.41. In Mark 14,24 where the prepositional phrase ὑπέρ does occur, it is not attached to the verb expressing deliverance (παραδίδωμι). The Markan predictions of deliverance and resurrection of the Son of Man thus do not belong to the so-called deliverance formulae in the pre-Pauline and Pauline tradition.

Neither do they belong to the equivalent formulaic expressions that Christ “died ‘for’ our sins, us, the godless or all.”¹⁶ Newer research on the background of the “giving oneself up/ being given up” phrases in pre-Pauline and Pauline tradition convincingly illustrated that the (παρα)δίδοναι ὑπέρ τινος and the ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπέρ τινος phrases are used as stylistic variants by the same authors to refer to the same events. The formulaic “dying for” and “giving one’s life for” phrases *do* belong together. Since Euripides introduced the notion of

¹⁴ Pace Backhaus, “Lösepreis” (see n. 2), 99.

¹⁵ Cf. C. Breytenbach, Grace, Reconciliation, Concord. The Death of Christ in Graeco-Roman Metaphors (NovTSup 135), Leiden 2010, 83–94.

¹⁶ Cf. 1Thess 5,10; Gal 2,21; 1Cor 8,11; 15,3; 2Cor 5,14; Rom 5,6–8; 8,34; 14,9.15.

the evil averting death in various tragedies, the phrases “to die ‘for’ someone” or “to deliver oneself or be delivered ‘for’ someone” were used as different ways to expressing the same event.¹⁷ This alternative use of language also occurs in the writings of Philo, in Paul, and the Gospel of John.¹⁸ In explaining the meaning of the crucifixion, Paul and his predecessors thus took up common early Greek language and tried to formulate their message in such a way that the death of a crucified person could be understood to have a positive effect on all humans.

The metaphoric mapping of the Greek tradition of the evil-averting voluntary death of a royal, who avoided the destruction of his/her kinsmen or nation, unto the crucifixion of Christ enabled early Pauline Christianity to portray the crucifixion of an individual, which was normally not regarded as having a positive effect, in a positive way. It helped the Greeks to overcome the foolishness of the cross, but this was not the route on which the narrator of the Gospel according to Mark led his main character, consequently both formulae known from the Pauline letters do not occur in his Gospel.

This does not mean that the Second Evangelist did not allow Jesus to interpret his envisaged deliverance into the hands of the Romans. But the Jesus of Mark did not do so by drawing on the Pauline strand of tradition. But in which terms the Evangelist let Jesus portray his death? In Mark 8,31 he puts his suffering, probing and rejection,¹⁹ death, and resurrection as the Son of Man under the theological *δεῖ*. These are all events that must happen, the inevitable things of the future which will happen to him (cf. τὰ μέλλοντα αὐτῷ συμβαίνειν in 10,32).²⁰ Unlike Matthew, Mark only once (14,49) explicitly states that Scripture must be fulfilled, but he lets his Jesus depict the deliverance and death of John the Baptist in the role of the returning Elia and his own envisaged suffering as the Son of Man as part of those things which are part of what has been written (cf. Mark 9,12–13; 14,21.27.49) and thus had to come to pass, now that the time (1,14) and Scripture has been fulfilled (14,49). Indirectly the narrator answers the question why Jesus had to be rejected, delivered, mocked, flogged, and killed, by quoting Ps^{LXX} 117,23

¹⁷ Cf. Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben* (see n. 10), 2.347–363.

¹⁸ Cf. Breytenbach, *Grace* (see n. 15), 86–87, on Philo, *Spec.* 3,153–154. Cf. *Rom* 4,25; 5,6–8; 8,32; *John* 3,16; 11,49–51.

¹⁹ Mark 8,31. The verb ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι means rejection after probing and alludes to Ps^{LXX} 117,22, quoted in Mark 12,10. The phrase μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας resounds Hos^{LXX} 6,2, altering the traditional τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ (cf. *1Cor* 15,4).

²⁰ On this understanding of the phrase, cf. Backhaus, “Lösepreis” (see n. 2), 99.

in Mark 12,11: “This happened before the Lord.”²¹ Taking his suffering upon himself, Jesus *expressis verbis* opposes what humans like Peter want and submits himself to the will of God (8,33; 14,36). The main character thus announces his deliverance, his suffering, rejection, killing, and resurrection as Son of Man as divine necessity, as being in accordance with what has been written and expects from Peter and himself to do what God wants. But does this answer the question with what purpose he had to be killed?

2 Ransom for those who have none (Mark 8,36–37 and 10,45)

In the Gospel according to Mark the Son of Man is not killed for the forgiving of sins as in the case of Matthew. From Mark 2,10 one can infer that the Son of Man has the God-given authority to grant forgiveness of sin, but without framing remarks connecting the remission of the debt with his passion or death as Matthew does (cf. Matt 1,21 and esp. 26,28). In Mark, the main character forgives sins on the basis of his authority as Son of Man without any reference to his death.²² The Gospel according to Mark also does not put phrases we know from Paul such as “Christ died ‘for’ the ungodly” or “‘for’ us as we were still sinners” or that he “was delivered ‘for’ us” or “‘for’ our trespasses” in the mouth of his main character. Neither does he describe the effect of this death as the justification of sinners or the change (reconciliation) of God’s enemies into his friends (cf. Rom 4,25; 5,6–11). But at least, his Jesus uses phrases like “to lose one’s life” or to “give in exchange for one’s life.” Let us have a closer look at the way in which the simplex διδόναι is used in connection with ψυχή in the sense of “life.”

²¹ A. Pietersma and B.J. Wright (eds.), *A New Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*, New York 2007 (NETS), aptly translates the phrase παρὰ κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη from the Psalm in which the αὕτη refers back to the rejection of the cornerstone with “This was from the Lord.”

²² The Jesus of Mark came to call sinners (2,17). In Israelite and Jewish tradition, it was God alone who could forgive sins (2Sam 12,13). In Mark 4,12, a citation of Isa 6,9–10, the underlying belief is still that those who repent will be forgiven by God. Mark moves beyond this. As Son of Man Jesus takes on God’s role, grants the paralytic remission of sins and heals him, breaking the connection between sin and disease (2,1–12). This is possible, because according to the Gospel of Mark Jesus is empowered by God’s Spirit. In the beginning of his Gospel, during Jesus’ baptism by John, Mark portrays the Holy Spirit ascending unto Jesus. As Son of God (1,11) he is closely related to God. God’s Son shares in the authority of God to forgive sins.

After Peter's "confession" and the first announcement of his passion (8,27–33), the main character Jesus elaborates on the requirements for those who follow him. In the short speech to the disciples and the people in 8,34–9,1, the Jesus of Mark calls upon those around him who want to follow him to take up their cross, that is, to be willing to suffer, to renounce themselves, and to follow him. To follow Jesus could lead to the loss of their own lives because of Jesus or because of the gospel he proclaims, but this will in the end result in gaining life. "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (8,35, NRSV). From the immediate context it is clear that the two questions in verses 36 and 37 comment on the preceding sayings on discipleship.²³ "What profit is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet be punished with the loss of his life? For what can a man give in exchange for his life?" (Mark 8,36–37). According to the main character, it is much better to follow him and to lose life now but to gain eternal life in the age to come (cf. 10,30), than to keep living, gaining the whole world, and being punished with the loss of life in future.²⁴ Note that the Jesus of Mark uses the future tense: she/he will lose (ἀπολέσει) or save (σώσει) his or her life. In verse 38, he states that the Son of Man will be ashamed (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπαισχυνθήσεται αὐτόν) of those who are presently ashamed of the gospel. In this future situation before Jesus as the returning Son of Man, neither man nor woman has an ἀντάλλαγμα τῆς ψυχῆς, nothing to give in exchange for his or her life. Perhaps Ps^{LXX} 48,8–9 forms the backdrop of these utterances in which the main character relates current behavior to future judgment: "Those who trust in their power, those who brag about the multitude of their wealth: If a brother does not redeem (οὐ λυτροῦται), shall then someone (else) pay ransom (λυτρώσεται)? To God he cannot give his ransom (ἐξίλασμα) and the price for the liberation of his life (τὴν τιμὴν τῆς λυτρώσεως τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ)."

For the question against which scriptural backdrop the Gospel according to Mark depicts the death of Jesus, it is important to have a closer look at the term ἐξίλασμα Ps^{LXX} 48,8–9, which we glossed with "ransom." The כפר (*kōfer*), which

²³ The Evangelist lets Jesus add a double question to two traditional sayings on discipleship; cf. Mark 8,34//Luke^Q 14,27//Matt^Q 10,38/Gos. Thom. 55 and Mark 8,35//Luke^Q 17,33//Matt^Q 10,39/Gos. Thom. 55.

²⁴ The verb ζημιώω occurs in the future passive and has the sense "to suffer loss" or "to be punished" (cf. BDAG, s.v.). The latter sense is often used in the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible (T. Muraoka, A Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint, Leuven 2009, s.v., glosses with "to make pay a fine" and "to penalise"). In this sense, it overlaps with ἀπόλλυμι which, when used transitively, means i.a. "to lose" (cf. BDAG, s.v.).

the LXX translates in Ps 48,8–9 and in 1Kings 12,3 with ἐξίλασμα,²⁵ was also rendered by ἄλλαγμα,²⁶ δῶρον,²⁷ λύτρον,²⁸ and with ἀντάλλαγμα as in Mark 8,37.²⁹ For the Jesus of the Second Gospel life is not exchangeable for monetary means.³⁰ The preceding context of Mark 8,36–37 makes it quite clear that it is not the death of Jesus that brings life to those who follow him, but discipleship. It is when they follow him and give up their life for his and the gospel's sake that they will be saved in future or that they will get eternal life (cf. 8,35; 10,30). Even though man has no ransom for his life at future judgment, those “who endure to the end” (13,13), who keep to him and his words, the gospel (8,35.38), will be saved.³¹ What is it in Jesus and in his words or the gospel, which forms the basis for the implicit assurance that those who give their life for the sake of Jesus and the gospel or who are not ashamed of him and his words will be saved?

Keeping in mind that (ἀντ)ἄλλαγμα and λύτρον can, like כפר (*kōfer*), denote ransom, the use of the phrase διδόναι ἀντάλλαγμα in Mark 8,37 calls for a closer treatment of the utterance of the main character in 10,45 that the Son of Man came to give his life as ransom for many (καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν). This text has been the subject of investigations in several monographs and essays;³² we focus our attention on it in the current context, because this is the first instance in Mark's narrative that Jesus explicitly states that many will benefit from the death of the Son of Man. One must, however, keep Mark 10,45 apart from the pre-Pauline and Pauline phrases “to die ‘for’ someone” and

25 Cf. also the α'-, θ'-, and σ'-translations of Exod 30,12; Prov 13,8; 21,18 and Amos 5,12.

26 Cf. Amos 5,12; Isa 43,3–4.

27 Cf. Job 36,18.

28 Cf. Exod 21,30; 30,12; Num 18,15; 35,31–32; Prov 6,35; 13,8; Isa 45,13.

29 Cf. Amos 5,12 v.l. On the use of the λύτρον terminology, cf. recently A.Y. Collins, Mark's Interpretation of the Death of Jesus, JBL 128 (2009) 545–554, here 546–548. On this topic, T. Yamayoshi, Von der Auslösung zur Erlösung. Studien zur Wurzel PDY im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament (WMANT 134), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2013, supplements the seminal article by E. Pax, Der Loskauf. Zur Geschichte eines neutestamentlichen Begriffes, Antonianum 37 (1962) 239–278.

30 But see Prov^{LXX} 13,8: λύτρον ἀνδρὸς ψυχῆς ὁ ἴδιος πλοῦτος πτωχὸς δὲ οὐχ ὑφίσταται ἀπειλήν.

31 On this, cf. M.D. Hooker, Not Ashamed of the Gospel. New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ, Grand Rapids 1995, 67–77, followed by G. van Oyen, The Meaning of the Death of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. A Real Reader Perspective, in: The Trial and Death of Jesus. Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark (CBET 45), ed. G. van Oyen and T. Shepherd, Leuven 2006, 119–148. On following Jesus, the gospel, and final salvation in Mark, cf. C. Breytenbach, Nachfolge und Zukunftserwartung nach Markus. Eine methodenkritische Studie (ATHANT 71), Zürich 1984, esp. 337–339.

32 For recent research, cf. J.C. Edwards, The Ransom Logion in Mark and Matthew. Its Reception and Its Significance for the Study of the Gospels (WUNT 2/327), Tübingen 2012, 2–10.

“to deliver oneself (or to be delivered) ‘for’ someone” in the Pauline tradition, because the notion of ransom, expressed by ἄλλαγμα and λύτρον or the verbs ἀπολύω and ἀπολυτρόω, is not occurring in that strand. In a traditio-historical perspective, Mark 10,45 does not belong to the (παρά)διδόναι ὑπέρ τινος and the ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπέρ τινος phrases and cannot be interpreted against the backdrop of the evil averting death reaching back to the tragedies of Euripides.

If one excludes the tradition of the evil averting death, the question immediately rises: For what benefit would the Son of Man give his life? In the narrative sequence, Mark 10,45 must be understood in the light of previous utterances of the main character on giving one’s life. In the light of his utterances in 8,36 and 37, it is fair to argue that Jesus as Son of Man in Mark announces to give his life as λύτρον for many, because at the final judgment men and women have nothing that they can give as ἄλλαγμα for their lives. It became clear that Mark 8,36–37, probably alluding to Ps^{LXX} 48,7–9, draws heavily on monetary terminology like κερδαίνω, ζημιόω, and to give an ἀντάλλαγμα. The recurring governing verb δίδοναι, the similarities between λύτρον and ἀντάλλαγμα, and the reoccurrence of ἀντί as preposition in Mark 10,45 urge the interpreter to understand Mark 8,36–37 and Mark 10,45 within the frame of “ransom.”³³ There are no indications in the Greek text of Mark suggesting the use of categories like “atonement” or “Sühne.”³⁴ Such dogmatic categories originated only much later and the fact that they have no corresponding Greek terms in the texts of early Christianity is no recommendation to use them in our descriptive language.³⁵

But the question still remains against which scriptural background Mark 10,45 has to be understood. There have been various efforts to explain Mark 10,45 as an allusion to Isa 53,10–12. As Morna Hooker³⁶ argued more than half a century ago,

³³ There is, however, no need to confine this category to the liberation from captivity or slavery, as do S. Dowd and E. Struthers Malbon, *The Significance of Jesus’ Death in Mark. Narrative Context and Authorial Audience*, JBL 125 (2006) 271–297, here 271 and 280–285. Cf. the critique of Collins, *Mark’s Interpretation* (see n. 29).

³⁴ Pace Backhaus, “Lösepreis” (see n. 2), 108–109; H.-C. Kammiller, *Das Verständnis der Passion Jesu im Markusevangelium*, ZThK 103 (2006) 461–491, here 472 and 477; A. Weihs, *Die Deutung des Todes Jesu im Markusevangelium. Eine exegetische Studie zu den Leidens- und Auferstehungsansagen*, Würzburg 2003; P.G. Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance. Atonement in Mark’s Gospel*, Downers Grove 2004. Cf. also the critique of M.D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, London 1959, 82–83, against the category “atonement.”

³⁵ On this debate see the preface and introductory articles in J. Frey and J. Schröter (eds.), *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, Tübingen 2012, and the reviews of research in C.A. Eberhart, *Kultmetaphorik und Christologie. Opfer- und Sühneterminologie im Neuen Testament* (WUNT 306), Tübingen 2013.

³⁶ Cf. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (see n. 34), 148–150.

in the case of the Hebrew text the evidence for this is remarkably thin, boiling down to the correspondence between רבִּים (*rabbîm*) and πολλῶν in Mark 10,45. In the Greek text there is another correspondence between the aorist passive παρεδόθη in the translation of Isa 53,12d (ἀνθ' ὧν παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ) and 12g (καὶ διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη) and the active aorist infinitive δοῦναι in Mark 10,45. But it must be noted that there is no corresponding phrase to δοῦναι in the Hebrew text in 53,12d.

In Isa 53,12d “because he has ‘poured out’ (הִפְּחָהּ, *hiphil* of עָרָה)³⁷ his life to death” is translated by “his psyche was ‘delivered unto’ (παρεδόθη) death.” The *hiphil* of פָּנָה in verse 12g is also translated by παρεδόθη. Why does the translator move from the meaning of פָּנָה with ל, “intercession” or “intervention on behalf of”³⁸ the rebels, to παραδιδόναι in the sense of “being handed over” because of their sins?³⁹ The reason appears to be that he takes the *hiphil* of פָּנָה in the sense of “to cause someone to be struck by something” and he translates it and עָרָה in verse 12d consequently by a form of παραδιδόναι. The last phrase of verse 12g “and he ‘will intercede’ (יִפְּחֶהָ, *hiphil* of פָּנָה)⁴⁰ for rebels” is thus rendered in the Greek text by “and because of their sins ‘he was handed over’ (διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη).” Available lexicographic knowledge on the use of the composite Greek verb shows that παραδιδόναι denotes the deliverance to a hostile force.⁴¹ The deviation of the Greek translation from the original Hebrew text suggests that in the case of Isa 53,6c, 12d, and 12g the translator presupposed the well-known Greek notion of someone being handed to a hostile power to be handled as his enemy pleases.⁴²

The servant of Isa 53 is counted among the lawless and handed over διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν. The function of the διὰ in the Greek translation in Isa^{LXX} 53,12 can be inferred from the preceding context. The role of the sins in Isa^{LXX} 53,12

37 Cf. L. Köhler and W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, 2 vols., Leiden 2004 (KB), s.v.

38 Cf. KB (see n. 37), s.v.

39 In v. 6 the Hebrew verb פָּנָה with ב means “to let something strike someone.” According to the Hebrew text the “Lord caused the iniquity of us all to strike him.” The Greek translator rendered the *hiphil* of פָּנָה with παρέδωκεν, turning the servant into the direct object of the Lord’s action: “The Lord ‘delivered’ him to our sins.” In Isa 53,6 and 12 the translator seems to reformulate the relation between the servant and the “iniquity” (53,6) or the “rebels” (53,12); cf. Breytenbach, *Grace* (see n. 15), 90.

40 The translator seems to understand it in this way. The verb can also mean “to make supplication”; cf. KB (see n. 37), s.v.

41 Cf. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Rev. and Augmented throughout by H.S. Jones with Assistance of R. McKenzie, Oxford 1996, s.v. I 2; C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3 vols., Peabody 1994, 3.12–23. See Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben* (see n. 10), 2.197–199, esp. n. 162.

42 Breytenbach, *Grace* (see n. 15), 90.

has to be interpreted in the light of the *διά* phrases in preceding verses.⁴³ It is not parallel to the use of *ἀντί*, “for,” in Mark 10,45 and ought to be translated: “But he was wounded on account of our sins, and was bruised *because of* our iniquities ... and the Lord handed him over to our sins.” He suffered punishment for their sake. The sins or the transgressions of the “us” are the reason why the servant was delivered or handed over. In Mark 10,45 the Son of Man gives his psyche as ransom to the benefit of many, and not because of them. Finally, the crucial term of Mark 10,45, the *λύτρον*, has no convincing correspondence in the Greek or the Hebrew. It is thus best to follow Hooker and leave it with Isa 53.⁴⁴

In this context, however, the text of Isa^{LXX} 43,3–4 is notable, for here are three elements, which also occur in Mark 10,45: the verb *διδόναι*, *ἄλλαγμα* as referential synonym of *λύτρον* and *ὑπέρ* (*bis*) used in the same sense as *ἀντί*. God who redeemed Israel, “the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, made Egypt and Ethiopia and Soene your (sc. Israel’s) exchange (*ἄλλαγμα*) on your behalf ... and will give many people on your behalf (*δώσω ἀνθρώπους πολλοὺς ὑπὲρ σοῦ*).”⁴⁵ It is well known that Mark models his story on Isaiah,⁴⁶ and the hypothesis that 10,45 alludes to Isa^{LXX} 43,3–4 is supported by the resounding of Isa^{LXX} 43,5–6⁴⁷ in Mark 13,27 when the Son of Man will send his messengers and gather his elect from the four winds. It is possible that the Evangelist could have combined the notion of ransom in 8,37 with that from Isa 43,3–4, but the passage from the prophet does not really explain in which way the *λύτρον* in the saying of the Jesus in Mark 10,45 becomes effective.

⁴³ The dative in the phrase in v. 6c (καὶ κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν) expresses the hostile force unto which the Lord delivers the servant.

⁴⁴ Pace R.E. Watts, *Jesus’ Death, Isaiah 53, and Mark 10:45. A Crux Revisited*, in: *Jesus and the Suffering Servant. Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, ed. W.H. Bellinger, Jr. and W.R. Farmer, Harrisburg 1998, 125–151, *passim*.

⁴⁵ Isa^{LXX} 43,3–4 (trans. adapted from NETS [see n. 21]): (3) ὅτι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεός σου ὁ ἅγιος Ἰσραὴλ ὁ σφύζων σε ἐποίησά σου ἄλλαγμα Αἴγυπτον καὶ Αἰθιοπίαν καὶ Σοήνην ὑπὲρ σοῦ (4) ... καὶ δώσω ἀνθρώπους πολλοὺς ὑπὲρ σοῦ ...

⁴⁶ Cf. M.D. Hooker, *Isaiah in Mark’s Gospel*, in: *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. S. Moyise and M.J.J. Menken, London 2005, 35–49; R.E. Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus and Mark* (WUNT 2/88), Tübingen 1997.

⁴⁷ Isa^{LXX} 43,5–6: (5) μὴ φοβοῦ ὅτι μετὰ σοῦ εἰμι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν ἄξω τὸ σπέρμα σου καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν συναΐξω σε (6) ἐρῶ τῷ βορρᾶ ἄγε καὶ τῷ λιβί μὴ κώλυε ἄγε τοὺς υἱοὺς μου ἀπὸ γῆς πόρρωθεν καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας μου ἀπ’ ἄκρων τῆς γῆς.

3 For what purpose did the Markan Son of Man give his life as ransom?

Foreshadowing implies that the narrator's main character knows what is to come. Mark 10,45 is foreshadowing the passion narrative. The Evangelist knew the tradition about the last supper, which was also known to Paul.⁴⁸ He retells the episode: When Jesus and the Twelve ate, Jesus took the bread, spoke a blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples. In the light of the foreshadowing in Mark 10,45, this symbolic action and utterance includes the Twelve in the many to whom the Son of Man will give his life as λύτρον. The Evangelist lets Jesus say: "Take; this is my body." It is important to note that the verb δίδωμι with the object τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ in Mark 10,45 resounds in the phrase λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶπεν· λάβετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου in Mark 14,22. The breaking and giving of the bread signifies the imminent breaking and giving of his body. The main character clearly refers to his death, when he calls the wine in the cup, his "blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many." The biblical phrase "shedding of blood" often refers to the killing of people,⁴⁹ for the life of a living being is considered to be in the blood.⁵⁰ The phrase is also often associated with the ransom which is required after bloodshed.

In Gen 9,6, the phrase "shedding of blood" is used specifically in the context of the exchange of human blood for blood (αἷμα ἀνθρώπου ἀντὶ τοῦ αἵματος), that is, life for life: "As for the one who shed a human's blood, in return for this blood it shall be shed. For by divine image I made humankind."⁵¹ In Num 35,31, it is prohibited to take ransom instead of the life (λύτρα περὶ ψυχῆς) of a murderer: "You shall not receive ransom instead of life from the killer who is liable to be destroyed by death, but you should kill him."⁵² To clean the land after bloodshed, ransom was needed, normally the blood of the one who shed the blood.

The phrase "my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" in Mark 14,24 reintroduces the notion of ransom, which has been announced in 10,45, and expands it with the notion of covenant.

⁴⁸ Cf. Mark 14,22–24//1Cor 11,23–25.

⁴⁹ Cf. Gen^{LXX} 37,22; Lev^{LXX} 17,4; Num^{LXX} 35,33; Deut^{LXX} 19,10; 21,7.

⁵⁰ Cf. Lev^{LXX} 17,11.

⁵¹ Gen^{LXX} 9,6 (trans. NETS [see n. 21]): ὁ ἐκχέων αἷμα ἀνθρώπου ἀντὶ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ ἐκχυθήσεται ὅτι ἐν εἰκόνι θεοῦ ἐποίησα τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

⁵² Num^{LXX} 35,31: οὐ λήμψεσθε λύτρα περὶ ψυχῆς παρὰ τοῦ φονεύσαντος τοῦ ἐνόχου ὄντος ἀναιρεθῆναι θανάτῳ γὰρ θανατωθήσεται.

Initially we underlined that Christian interpretation of the death of Christ presupposes his crucifixion. The fact that Jesus' blood was shed, that he was killed through crucifixion, leads to the question: Why? In Mark's narrative, the main character announces his death (8,31; 9,31; 10,33–34), he takes it upon himself voluntarily (14,36) as something that has to happen by divine ordinance (8,31.33), and declares that as Son of Man he came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (10,45). When Jesus identifies the bread with his body and the wine in the cup with his blood, the utterance in Mark 10,45 is presupposed and the bread and cup metaphorically refers to his life, the life about to be shed for many (14,24).⁵³ Because to shed blood refers to death, the line of interpretation for Mark 14,24 should be taken from what the main character said about giving life. Because man can give nothing in return for his life (8,37), it is the Son of Man who gives his life as a ransom for many (10,45). When one places the blood of the covenant in Mark 14,24 in its narrative context, it is best understood as an exchange, ransom for the doomed life of many.

But why is it called the blood of the covenant? Mark might be recalling the covenant of Exod 24,8 via its reception in Zech 9,11–12:⁵⁴ “As for you, by the blood of the covenant, you have sent your prisoners out of the dry dungeon (well that has no water).”⁵⁵ A בור (*bôr*), a well or cistern, with no water in it, often served as a prison (Gen 37,20; 40,15; Isa 24,22), which is clearly the meaning in Zech 9,11. Indeed, its translation λάκκος can metaphorically refer to *sheol* (cf. Ps^{LXX} 27,1). Both Mark 14,24 and Zech 9,11 are followed by a positive statement. In Mark 14,25, it is the advent of the royal reign of God, and in Zech 9,12 the restitution of the people, who now live on Zion: “You shall reside in fortresses, o prisoners of the assembly, and for one day as expatriate, I will recompense you double.” If Mark 14,24 is read in the light of 10,45 and Zech 9,11, the meaning of the words of the main character can be construed as follows: The wine in the cup symbolizes the life of Jesus, which will be poured out in terms of the covenant. His death sets the prisoners free, having a ransoming effect (Mark 14,24 with Zech 9,11). Man is not able to give any exchange for his own life (8,37). The Christ, the Son of Man, came to serve and to give his life in exchange for many (10,45). In the scene of the last supper, he recaps on the announcement that he came to give his life as ransom (10,45). He

⁵³ One should not utilize Matt 26,28 to introduce the notion of forgiveness of sin into Mark 14,24. In the dialog in Mark 2,5.10 Jesus did not connect his authority to forgive sin to his death.

⁵⁴ On this, cf. C. Breytenbach, *The Minor Prophets in Mark's Gospel*, in: *The Minor Prophets in the New Testament* (Library of New Testament Studies 377), ed. M.J.J. Menken and S. Moyise, London 2009, 27–37, here 35–36.

⁵⁵ Zech^{LXX} 9,11: καὶ σὺ ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης ἐξαπέστειλας δεσμίους σου ἐκ λάκκου οὐκ ἔχοντος ὕδωρ.

explains that the wine in the cup symbolizes his blood as bearer of his life, which when poured out during his violent death has, in terms of the covenant, ransom-ing effect for many (14,24). Because he has given the ransom that no human can give, those who adhered to him, the gospel, and his words (8,35–38) do not have to fear future judgment. When he returns, he will gather the elected (13,27). That the breaking of the bread and the shed of wine refers to Jesus' death is confirmed by his quotation of Zech 13,7 in Mark 14,27. It is written that God will smite the shepherd.⁵⁶

The last utterance of the Jesus of the Gospel of Mark is his cry from the cross before he dies.⁵⁷ He quotes Ps 22,2: “ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι; which is translated, ‘My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?’” (15,34).

The author seems to translate the quoted Aramaic phrase not quoting the Greek translation. Like the Aramaic and Greek text in Mark 15,34, the Hebrew text of Ps 22,2 has no correspondence to *πρόσχε μοι* (“attend to me”) in Ps^{LXX} 21,2. With *εἰς τί* (“why”) he exactly translates the *למה* (*lēmāh*; Hebrew *lāmmāh*); he does not introduce *ἐγκατέλιπές με* with *ἵνα τί* (“for what”) as the major Old Greek manuscripts did. As the Evangelist normally follows the LXX, he seems to have taken over a traditional Aramaic quotation as part of the passion narrative, which has been molded on Ps 22.

The cry is narrated in Aramaic and causes misunderstanding, a typical narrative theme in the Gospel. The narrator has quoted Ps 22,19 in Mark 15,24 and alluded to 22,7–9 in 15,29, but why does he put Ps 22,2 on the lips of the dying Jesus?⁵⁸ Did the narrator want more than the similarity in sound between *ελωι* and *Elia* to develop the topic of misunderstanding? What would be the right interpretation of the cry? The most probable solution on the question of the main character Jesus, why God had forsaken him, is that he is giving his life as ransom for many (10,45), his blood being shed for many (14,24), he is abandoned by God. He is giving his life in exchange for the ransom no human can give (8,37). What must happen to him (8,31), that what has been written (9,12; 14,21), he subjects to the will of God (14,36).

⁵⁶ On this, cf. Breytenbach, *Minor Prophets* (see n. 54), 28–29.

⁵⁷ On this, cf. W.S. Campbell, “Why Did You Abandon Me?” Abandonment Christology in Mark’s Gospel, in: *The Trial and Death of Jesus. Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark* (CBET 45), ed. G. van Oyen and T. Shepherd, Leuven 2006, 99–117, here 113–116.

⁵⁸ Cf. the discussion in S. Ahearne-Kroll, *Challenging the Divine. LXX Psalm 21 in the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Mark*, in: *The Trial and Death of Jesus. Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark* (CBET 45), ed. G. van Oyen and T. Shepherd, Leuven 2006, 119–148, here 141–142.

4 The occasion of salvation

In chapter 13, the narrator lets the main character predict the future. He will only return as Son of Man after the cosmic catastrophe following on the desecration of the temple. Then it seems that everyone will perish except those under the addressees who endure to the end (Mark 13,13,20). Through his messengers, Jesus returning as Son of Man will gather his elected (13,27). These are those who were not ashamed of him and his words during the tribulations (8,38). How being saved by the returning Son of Man and his life given as ransom for many relate to each other is not part of the narrated events in the Gospel according to Mark, but it is implied if one considers the prediction the Markan Jesus makes about the future during his speech to the four disciples in chapter 13. Unlike Paul, the Gospel according to Mark does not introduce Adam's sin and death at final judgment as its consequence as the situation from which humankind is to be saved. In the case of Mark salvation is from the tribulations and persecutions in those terrible last days which end in a cosmic catastrophe in which all life will be lost. This situation will come within the lifespan of the audience of the main character Jesus (cf. 9,1; 13,30). In this situation humans can give no ransom for their life. The Son of Man who gave his life as ransom, however, he has been resurrected. Sitting to the right of God who has the power (14,62), even to resurrect the dead (12,24), he will come with great power (13,26) and the glory of the Father to save those who adhered to his words (8,38), he will send his messengers to collect the faithful from the four corners of the earth (13,27).

To conclude, in the narrative the main character Jesus interprets his own death by the way of predictions. Within the frame of the "Messianic Secret" only he knows the real meaning of events and actions. All the characters in the narrative do not understand. He has the foreknowledge and can thus predict his own death and ascribe meaning to it before it even happens. In all these cases of foreshadowing, he calls himself the Son of Man. His death is inevitably part of what has to happen (8,31), in accordance with what has been written (καθὼς γέγραπται). When announcing his death in these proleptic passages, the main character Jesus uses language, which alludes to the Scriptures. In this way the narrator enhances his strategy to underline that Jesus as the Son of Man knowingly and willingly gives his life as ransom for many. But the prediction of his passion is followed by the prediction of his resurrection as Son of Man. Returning as the Son of Man when the sun is darkened, the moon dimmed, and the stars fall from heaven (cf. Mark 13,24–25), he will save those who followed him and adhered to his words from this cosmic catastrophe.